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ROZVOJ KOMUNIKAČNÍCH DOVEDNOSTÍ
V PSANÍ V HODINÁCH ANGLICKÉHO
JAZYKA

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE WRITING
SKILLS IN EFL CLASSES

Diplomová práce: 12–FP–KAJ–156

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anglického jazyka
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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Cíl:

Diplomová práce zahrnuje akademický výzkum a praktické ověření teorie, která se týká rozvoje komunikace v psaném projevu v anglickém jazyce.

Cílem je prokázat, že pokud je ve výuce psaní kladen důraz na interakci a autentičnost psaní, pak jsou žáci lépe motivováni vypracovat obsahově i formálně náležité psané texty.

Zpracování praktického projektu, analýza a interpretace výsledků v uvedené diplomové práci prokáží porozumění metodám analýzy teoretických východisek a jejich kritického zhodnocení a schopnost využití teoretických závěrů při volbě vhodných metod při výuce cizího jazyka. Posouzení efektivnosti teorie a zvolených metodických postupů v praxi dále ukáže schopnost využití evaluace jako nezbytné strategie hodnocení celého výzkumu.

Požadavky:

Platnost hypotézy diplomové práce bude ověřena v hodinách anglického jazyka na některé ze základních škol.

Metody:

Na základě studia odborné a metodologické literatury jsou vypracovávány návrhy plánů hodin anglického jazyka, jejichž účinnost je detailně vyhodnocena pomocí metod kvalitativního výzkumu, především pomocí reflexe a dotazníků určených pro žáky.

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NUNAN, David. Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom. Cambridge: University Press, 1991.

ATWAN, Robert. Why do we write: a thematic reader. New York: Harper&Row, 1986.

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Název práce: Rozvoj komunikačních dovedností v psaní v hodinách anglického jazyka
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Anotace

Diplomová práce se zabývá tématem psaní textů v hodinách anglického jazyka a rozvojem této dovednosti. Hlavní zaměření práce a praktické části je především komunikativní aspekt psaní. To totiž může motivovat žáky, kteří uvidí, že psaní nezahrnuje pouze umělé psaní textů na zadaná témata, ale také psaní za účelem výměny informací – komunikace. To poukazuje na využití této dovednosti v reálném životě, což může velmi významně pomoci motivovat žáky, aby si mohli tuto komplexní a poměrně komplikovanou dovednost osvojit snáz.

Klíčová slova: komunikace, komunikativní psaní, psaní v cizím jazyce, psaní v anglickém jazyce

Summary

The diploma thesis deals with writing texts in the EFL lessons and the development of the skill. The main aim of the thesis and the practical part is mainly the communicative aspect of writing. This can motivate learners who would see that writing does not mean only compositions of artificial texts on assigned themes but that one can communicate via writing. This aspect points to the real-life use of the skill, which can quite significantly help motivate learners so that they could acquire this complex and quite complicated skill easier.

Key words: communication, communicative writing, writing in foreign language, writing in English

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Introduction

English is one of the most widely used languages in the world; in fact it is a lingua franca nowadays. Anywhere we go it is highly probable that we can communicate with other people in English. It is used in all possible situations and nowadays it is language number one for any branches in science, humanities or management.

Moreover, if anybody wants to apply for a job these days, he or she is supposed to understand and communicate in English. A wide variety of jobs require at least some competence in English; only few professions of the lowest rank do not directly require it. Thus, if one wants to achieve higher working objectives, English is one of the necessities.

Therefore, teaching the English language has become a part of general education at Czech schools, which makes demands on the quality of teaching English, especially at basic schools. Quality teaching means that teachers are able to help learners learn at high levels, for which they have to acquire complex skills to do this.

In the English language, a proficient learner should be able to understand the language but also use it both in oral and written form. While great attention in English lessons is usually paid to explanation of various grammar features like tenses or multitude of different forms of words and extension of vocabulary, writing skills are not usually properly trained, especially at elementary schools. Writing is used rather as a support skill for other aspects of language or as a means of completing a variety of tasks; however practising writing as a part of communication is often neglected.

For that reason, the aim of this paper is to show that teaching communicative writing can become a common part of an English language lesson which can motivate the learners and help them develop their writing performance.

THEORETICAL PART

1 Benefits of writing

Writing is a specific activity that accompanies us every day and helps us fulfil many needs that we meet. Moreover, in the real world, we either write because we are required to do so or because we want to. Filling in various kinds of forms, sending requests, writing a CV or homework at school are examples of pieces of writing that we have to do. Apart from this, we can have other reasons to start writing: to share our ideas with somebody else or just for the love of writing. No matter which one out of the two reasons prevails, writing is a brilliant way to express our own ideas and also a useful communicative tool through which the ideas can be sent and a reply then received.

First of all, writing helps us keep in touch with other people. While we write different kinds of notes, messages via mobiles or chat online, which are the written communication ways used most frequently nowadays, we want to communicate in order to ask for, to announce or just to inform about anything. On the personal level, we often write notes for others, for example, while leaving home, when we need to buy something or want somebody to do something. Sometimes we write birthday cards, postcards or messages from holiday. Besides, in formal interaction we fill in different forms, write curriculum vitae and leave different pieces of information for people at work. Thus in this sense, writing helps us satisfy some of the basic life necessities which involve written interaction.

Behind the visible actions, writing improves various brain capabilities including diverse ways of thinking, which is essential for development of creativity. Moreover, writing helps us organise our perceptions, actions, thoughts and emotions when we want to formulate our own experiences. Writing things down encourages constructing multiple ideas and thoughts so that we could produce meaningful and logical pieces of text. Trying to make other people comprehend what we want to tell them requires a complex thinking ability. If we are able to write in a logical and effective way, we are then able to explain a complex situation to ourselves or to readers, we are able to think systematically of multitude of different aspects and we can even become better planners.

Finally, writing is a perfect tool for learning new things. For example, through writing we can realize the meaning of a word, the complex structure of a sentence and a paragraph, which builds linguistic readiness for other skills like reading. In this point of view, writing helps us understand grammar and, on the other hand, a good knowledge of grammar helps us become better writers as well as better readers and speakers.

In addition, writing increases our communicative skills as writing is also considered to be a specific form of communication through which ideas and feelings can be transferred from one person to another. Therefore, writing does not involve only the cognitive and expressive processes, but also a communicative process that involves a reader, the writer as well as the purpose of writing. Communicating through writing is essential in the mother tongue and therefore an important skill in a foreign language. “Communicative ability is the goal of foreign language learning” (Littlewood 1981, xi) because apart from manipulating language structures, learners must be equipped with strategies that would help them apply these structures to their “communicative functions in real situations and real time” (ibid).

However, writing causes also many problems as it is not as natural activity as, for example, speaking. The writing competence is therefore quite demanding to acquire and this produces several specific obstacles.

2 Why is writing difficult?

2.1 Difficulties associated with writing

Writing is not an easy skill to achieve, which also Nunan (1989, 35) admits: “It has been argued that learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of macroskills for all language users regardless of whether the language in question is a first, second or foreign language.” This is because writing is not a natural activity like speaking but requires higher and more complex thinking. Besides, even proficient writers say that writing is neither an easy nor a spontaneous activity.

Byrne (1988, 4) lists three concrete aspects that make writing difficult. From the psychological point of view one aspect is grounded in the nature of communication. If a person gives a piece of information and if communication is to take place, this situation demands someone else present in the same time and place who can give immediate feedback to what has already been said. Therefore writing, where the recipient of the

information is not present, is in its essence a solitary activity and a possible reply is received with delay. For that reason this kind of communication is very different from the natural one that everyone does every day.

Linguistic point of view determines another perspective. Speech is in its core spontaneous, people do not pay much attention to organising structures or connecting sentences. The real oral communication covers repetitions, backtracks, fillers or expansions, which do not appear in common written discourse. Harmer (2002, 246) says that “fewer formulaic phrases are found in writing than in speech, and this is why writing in particular has to be both coherent and cohesive.” Absence of these features is specifically compensated in writing by means of structural devices like sequence, linking of sentences and even sentence structure, which then enables future interpretation. But the spontaneity of expression which appears in oral communication gets often lost or has to be pretty long acquired.

The third reason why writing is difficult is a cognitive aspect that relates to human nature itself. We all grow up learning to speak and that is what we do most of the time. After all, we all want to talk and convey our own experiences. Speaking does not take much conscious effort and topics are mainly of our personal interests or at least they are socially or professionally relevant to our lives. Compared to this, writing is learned through instructions, there are certain phrases that do not usually occur in speech and appropriate written forms have to be mastered. Children aged 5 have already developed the command of the spoken language corresponding to their social needs but many children are not able to express these ideas in a written form. Partially, this is due to the nature of the task that is not natural for them, partially because they do not use writing in real everyday interaction. Although writing carries prestige in many cultures, many people do not use the skill after leaving school, only for specialised purposes like filling in a form (Byrne 1988, 5).

All these characteristics explain why producing a piece of writing is for a lot of learners complicated. Moreover, when the written texts are to be produced in a foreign language, more troublesome situations may occur.

2.2 Writing in English

Writing in a second language is very complicated since it requires not only proficiency in the target language, knowledge of differences in culture but also the

grasp of rhetorical approach to the text and first language literacy. A writer in a foreign language has to consider not only the composition process with its organizational and content features but a new code of a foreign language as well.

One of the basic problems may occur when writers have quite a limited command of language to express their ideas. English grammar and spelling, syntax, collocations, idioms and other language items are the most complicated features to be learnt and moreover they differ from the first language, Czech.

Next aspect that makes writing in another language complicated is the cultural background. Different cultures have their own points of view on reality, their own understanding of the world and traditions and even the way of thinking can be different. This all affects the nature and usage of language. Many features can be similar but a lot of characteristics are original as they issue from the particular country, its tradition and historical context.

Organization and style are other problematic aspects. Text organization means that a writer uses a number of standard forms that play the role of clues and therefore help readers understand the information presented in the text. Appropriate style respects the purpose, audience and context of the writing task; besides, a writer achieves a correct style by means of word choice and sentence fluency. The difficulties can be primarily caused by the lack of proficiency in writing in the mother tongue, which does not necessarily need to be at the appropriate level. People are very often not taught to use organizational skills effectively in writing in L1. Therefore it is much more difficult for a writer to produce a piece of writing in a foreign language, as Byrne (1988, 6) stresses.

To sum up, the skills that are involved in writing are highly complex as they comprise not only higher level skills of planning and organising writing, but also an array of subskills like spelling, punctuation, word choice etc. Writing is even more difficult if it should be done in a foreign language. On the other hand, when obstacles are being constantly and effectively dealt with, the writing skill can be developed and used very easily to communicate ideas and keep in touch with people worldwide. Chatting and writing text messages is one of the most used ways of communication in the present era of social networks, blogs and connecting our lives and experiences via the Internet.

3 Writing as a means of communication

3.1 Communication

Communication is a process of transmitting information in which speech, signs or actions are used. This transmission occurs between two or more sides that exchange the information.

Strictly speaking, it involves very often two people – the sender of a message or the writer and the receiver of a message or the reader. These two roles change during the interaction between these two sides and this action triggers communication. As the participants of communication change their roles, they use various skills and abilities to ensure the smooth and sensible flow of interaction.

Farrel (2009, 6) lists six fundamental principles for a communication to be realised. Firstly, “communication is a process of constant change”, which means that communication is not a constant process but it changes according to the situation in which it is realised. Secondly, “communication is a system of rules” that are accepted by the participants of the conversation almost unconsciously. Thirdly, “communication messages are both verbal and nonverbal”, even if in written communication nonverbal language cannot be usually present. Then, “communication is transactional”, which means that both communicators create and consume messages. In addition, “the communication process involves mutual influence”, as the receiver of the message reacts to it in his or her own way. And lastly, “communication occurs in a context that influences the process of communication”. As the context can vary a lot, it influences the form, purpose and delivery of a message in great deal. If these principles are present in the interaction, the communication takes place.

A specific mode of communication is writing. However, in order for a writer to convey ideas meaningfully and in a logical way so that the message meets a real communicative aim, he or she has to possess, according to Littlewood (1981, 13), following skills. The participants of a communicative act are expected to have the ability to understand linguistic structures and vocabulary, then to know the communicative functions of linguistic forms and lastly to be able to relate the forms to appropriate nonlinguistic knowledge of the relationship between language and its non-linguistic context. These three skills help people communicate successfully via writing.

Competent writing as a communicative means plays a very important role, no matter whether we are writing a letter, an essay, a CV or an application form. As writing can be done for different purposes and for different audience, their forms also differ.

3.2 Types of written communication

Types of written communication can be considered, according to the reasons why they have been produced, as intrapersonal, interpersonal, public and mass. Intrapersonal writing means that the receiver is the writer himself/herself, while for other types of writing a certain number of receivers are present (Pearson et al. 2000, 18). Interpersonal communication occurs for different reasons: “to solve problems, to resolve conflicts, to share information, to improve perceptions of oneself, or to fulfil social needs, such as the need to belong or to be loved” (ibid, 19). Public communication “most often informs or persuades, but it can also entertain, introduce, announce, welcome, or pay tribute” (ibid). The purpose of a mass communication is to write a piece of text that appears in newspapers and magazines or other types of print material.

For all these purposes both printed and in-hand forms of written word can be used. Even today, in the time of electronic conveniences, some people choose to write by hand or print out the written texts so that they have tangible evidence of information they communicate. For some people writing a note on a sheet of paper while leaving home or an office is more convenient and quicker than clicking it on a mobile phone. Therefore writing by hand also nowadays remains a type of written communication.

Apart from the traditional written communication in paper, new means of delivering messages have been invented and have been used widely. They include communication transmitted by means of electronic devices, such as phones, computers or a lot of smart devices that abound in market nowadays. The use of electronic way of written communication is a widely spread means of communication and therefore, a proportionately bigger attention is dedicated to this means of a written communication in the practical project of this paper.

In both kinds of written communication mentioned above there are several characteristics that are applied to both of them. Written communication takes into account the time shift, the form and audience. The time shift concerns how quickly a

reaction arrives, the form concerns length and language used for an utterance and audience concerns the style of communication, either formal or informal.

The time shift plays the main role as a feature that is typical of communication in writing. Even if written communication cannot always count on immediate response as the oral one does, different types of written communication allow people different speed of giving and receiving a reply. The long-term option of writing a letter via snail mail requires usually much slower response than the medium-term possibility like writing an e-mail. One of the quickest possibilities is writing or “chatting” on the Internet. The last option allows so quick a response that it resembles the immediate interaction of the oral communication. Younger people tend to write to their peers as quickly and briefly as possible. They are not afraid to try out and use the newest software and devices with the quickest possibilities of interaction. More conservative people usually rely on medium-term possibilities like e-mails.

The form of the written communication varies according to the situation and the audience, which concerns the level of formality or informality. This will be dealt with in more detail in the next part of this paper.

All types of writing that have been described so far have one important characteristic: all of them are closely tied to daily communication in which we share information, thoughts and feelings with other people through writing. In order to deliver our thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely via writing, it is important to keep in mind certain aspects that help a communication to become effective.

3.3 Aspects that make writing communicative

In order that understandable communication can really take place, writing must comply with two fundamental aspects that Harmer (2002, 247) defines. They include “sociocultural rules” referring to the use of different levels and kinds of language with people of different social and professional status and “turn-taking” as an important organisational pattern in communication.

Sociocultural rules, according to Harmer (2002, 247), include knowledge of possible differences between cultural backgrounds of a writer and an audience. This comprises, first of all, appropriate formality, which means using certain fixed forms and words that are used in an interaction with certain groups of people. A student writes an e-mail to a teacher in a different manner than to his friend or to a sibling in the way that

different vocabulary, sentence forms and specific structures are used. Other feature counted into the sociocultural rules is mainly the way people of different sexes, age groups, social or professional status interact. A man chooses other words while talking or writing to a female friend than to a male friend as well as teenagers use another language while communicating with a much older person and an employee uses different vocabulary while interacting with a boss. All these factors influence the way people choose language for communicative writing in different situations, no matter whether it is a letter, an e-mail or a message on a piece of paper.

Turn-taking can take place only if people are participants of a communication. It allows the participants to change roles of a source-writer and a receiver-reader and therefore to interact with each other. Turn taking means the back and forth interaction either verbally or non-verbally. Even if turn taking is typical of spoken conversation, its patterns can be observed also in a written communication. In contrast with spoken conversation, however, in the written communication turns are not usually interrupted and it is not always guaranteed that a response will immediately follow the turn, if ever. In written communication it is quite often easier to guess the signal of turn-taking than in the oral one – when an e-mail or a message ends, it is clear that the other one can react.

3.4 Online communicative writing situations

As the focus of this paper is on writing letters via e-mail and receiving information in this way, the communication transmitted by means of electronic devices in particular is covered in the chapter. An important set of social conventions that determine proper manners when writing between two or more users on the Internet is covered in a guideline called Netiquette. Netiquette was established as a guide through appropriate and decent online communication and its rules help writers effectively communicate with others electronically.

There are two possibilities according to the Netiquette Guidelines (1995, 2-14) that aim to serve for communication: “One-to-One Communication” and “One-to-Many Communication”. The first possibility comprises writing e-mails and “talks”. The latter one consists of e-mails and contributions to blogs and other writings designated for many receivers.

In all of these online writing situations certain basic rules are to be followed. Some of the most important rules are for example that every message should contain a certain subject telling the purpose of a message and there should be a recognisable short and clear signature telling who a sender is. Then, for example, words written in capital letters should not be used as it could be understood as shouting at a person. One of the main rules is: “Be conservative in what you send and liberal in what you receive” (Netiquette Guidelines, 1995, 2-14) because some messages can, even unintentionally, provoke the reader but there is no need to respond to heated messages.

Another feature that plays a big role is formality. It means in other words “a level of intimacy” (Harmer 2002, 248). When a writer distances himself or herself from the audience, he or she uses different grammar and lexis than when he or she is closer to the readers. Particular phrases are also used while writing to a person who is hierarchically higher than the writer while other words and phrases may be used while writing to a close friend. Different register is also used while writing a contribution to a personal blog on the Internet and different words and phrases while writing an article to a magazine or newspapers.

Different styles are as well to be considered in the online kind of written interaction. This is influenced by various factors such as the purpose of communication, a setting of a particular situation and a kind of a channel or the way a message is being transmitted. Therefore, writing a post to a magazine would be different from sending an e-mail to a friend. In general, the rhetorical sensitivity is vital in communication as Ede (2002, 6) emphasizes. She says that the target audience as well as the purpose of writing should be considered when thinking about an appropriate stylistic adjustment of a piece of writing to make a communication effective.

If a piece of communicative writing is to be properly realized, all the rules mentioned above should be applied appropriately. Otherwise, the communication would be worsened or even impossible between people who do not come into direct interaction. The rules are even more important if writing is realized in another than a mother tongue. And therefore, it is important to improve the writing skill – the best way to do this is by practice. The practice in general writing and also in communicative writing can be done through constant writing practice supported by an effective input and instruction from a teacher.

METHODOLOGICAL PART

4 Teaching communicative writing

4.1 Developing writing competence

Development of the writing skill is in fact a work in progress, because the more one writes, the easier it gets. This means that writing competence improves by the time and practice. Moreover, developing writing competence requires support which significantly helps the improvement of the skill. It can be done through properly designed writing instruction that should respect the following methodological principles.

First of all, discussing the purpose and importance of writing in general is the primary step that should be taken into account. This can be done very easily by brainstorming and discussion about learners' typical reasons for writing in their everyday life. This can remind them of many moments when and why they write without even realizing it and this shows them that writing really matters in their everyday lives. Learners could be also prompted to recall successful writing experience in past and factors that helped them succeed. This can provide a real purpose to writing activities and can motivate learners a lot.

Subsequently, during a writing activity the vital thing for the learners' motivation is to keep always in mind the personalized meaningful purpose of an activity and to minimize manipulative writing. This can be enhanced via tools like model texts or small-group conversations preceding the written activity.

Another essential feature in developing the writing competence is choosing a theme. At the beginning, writers' themes shouldn't deal with something that is too complicated as it may inhibit unnecessary insecurity in dealing with writing. Otherwise, this could harm learners' motivation and self-confidence in writing and also in work with the foreign language which could have disastrous consequences.

Since the basic way of expressing ideas is speaking, Magnan (1985, In: Hadley 1993, 291) suggests that "we might expect learners at first to write down or transcribe in the second language something they might say." This can be accomplished via writing letters covering any topic of interest, for example expressing current state of mood or writing about favourite food, or describing an object, an event or situation, for example

hobbies, everyday procedures or favourite movies and songs. A teacher should provide learners with writing activities that would satisfy learners' actual intellectual level and possible areas of interest. The essential aim is to motivate a learner and show that writing can be a meaningful and simultaneously a manageable activity.

Learners should also be prevented from going beyond their actual linguistic knowledge, which means that topics should correlate with the actual knowledge of a language of the learners. The lower the level of language knowledge, the fewer possibilities to express ideas a learner has. This is usually caused by a small range of vocabulary, not sufficient grasp of L2 and also many negative transfers from L1. For these reasons any writing tasks should always respect the language knowledge the particular learners have at hand.

On the other hand, with constant practice the development of the writing skill improves gradually and the writing assignments become less controlled, which turns learners into more confident and capable writers. Their ability to use their writing and language potential increases step by step as their language knowledge and writing competence get better and as the learners become more self-confident in writing tasks. Therefore, a lot of attention should be paid to acquiring the particular microskills with respect to learners' needs and interests.

4.2 Writing as a product / process

A common reason to practise writing in L2 lessons is to pass a test or an exam and to get a good grade. This means that writing is limited to producing a final product and receiving an assessment from a teacher. This, however, does not motivate learners to be engaged in writing that becomes an artificial task for them. Therefore, in order to prepare learners for the writing that they will do in their future life, focus should be also paid to each stage of the whole process of writing. These two different approaches in teaching writing are called “product writing” and “process writing”.

The product approach focuses, according to Harmer (2002, 257), on the aim of a writing task and the final product is of the main interest. Nunan (1989, 36) expands this idea when he states that the end product should be readable, grammatically correct and it should obey discourse conventions. As the product-oriented approach emphasizes mechanical aspects of writing, activities that are based on correct sentence and paragraph writing are emphasised. This includes copying, imitation and developing

sentences and paragraphs. These activities are neither for a teacher nor for learners much time-consuming, which is the main strength of the approach.

The process approach focuses on various stages of writing and helps learners consider particular phases of putting together a complete piece of work, which is more manageable for EFL learners. The phases, which do not necessarily need to be organized linearly, comprise choosing a topic, pre-writing, planning, drafting, reviewing and re-writing. Nunan (1989, 36) recommends this approach mainly for less skilled writers because their “writing can become more mechanical in correctness and form and revision of language with organization of ideas make learners more aware of their mistakes”.

However, process approach is more time-consuming than the former approach and in some situations the process approach is not appropriate, especially when writing should be prompt and brief. As Harmer (2002, 258) says, in these situations focusing on process is not suitable “because we want students to write quickly as part of a communication game, or when working alone, we want them to compose a letter or brief story on the spot.”

On the contrary, the process approach can develop learners' ability to revise and rewrite their written texts so that their final product is meaningful and logical. The most important aspect of the process approach is the meaningfulness of the task, which creates a personal connection to the topic and the whole procedure of writing.

Applebee (In: Hadley 1993, 321) points out that in different situations different strategies should be used, therefore while teaching writing both process and product approaches must be involved and linked together in a syllabus. A very similar attitude is mentioned by Byrne (1988, 21-23), who states that “writing should be taught in a way that combines focus on accuracy that is gradually being reduced, fluency, organization of a text and focus on purpose that should be in the real world.” But when communication is the main aim, writing as a product that stresses accuracy should figuratively step aside and writing as a process that emphasises fluency should prevail.

4.3 A writing lesson

A typical writing lesson should follow, according to Hadley (1993, 308), a particular order. At first a discussion of the type of writing takes place. A model is presented and analysed and exercises dealing with organizational devices and themes

are practised. Composing is done with help of guidelines or model texts and learners may write their own outlines or answer some given questions which would lead them to creation of the structure of a text. Afterwards, instructions dealing with organizational and mechanical considerations follow. Revision of organizational and stylistic features and grammar is usually the last stage of the whole structure of a writing lesson.

Teaching writing compositions very often keeps this simple linear plan of first drafts, revisions and final drafts. Nevertheless, Hadley (1993, 319) opposes this fixed structure when she says that experienced writers frequently proceed differently in various genres. Poets, novelists or story writers do not use this kind of outlines and the linear process of drafts is not that simple. It resembles rather a more integrated process that has a form of a kind of a plan in writer's mind, not on paper.

However, in a classroom, teachers do not teach ready writers and poets; therefore, learners should be guided step by step to feel secure and to get used to the process of writing via guided tasks.

4.3.1 Theme

First of all, the choice of a theme is an important part of a writing lesson preparation. The theme should be appropriate to the learners, which relates to their knowledge of the world, language level, interest and utilization in the real world.

The best way to start with writing is to choose a theme learners would talk about. It can be anything that is in their interest, e.g. a description of a hobby to somebody, thinking about some experience, narrating what happened at an event etc. This can motivate learners a lot and help overcome some difficulties that writing produces. Afterwards, the clarification of the extent of a topic follows.

4.3.2 Pre-writing

The purpose of the pre-writing stage is to provide the learners with a focus on their ideas, the language for expressing these ideas and their interest in putting these ideas in a meaningful piece of writing.

When starting any unknown activity, people always imitate something that has already been done, said or written. A text which resembles the final output that learners are to do can serve simply as a model. It can be also used as a kind of resource for language and ideas. The technique of presentation of a model text is mainly carried out when writing in prose style, though, this can be done as well with writing a letter.

The model text can be easily replaced with a picture or a set of pictures. Even Nunan (1989, 59) says that “a picture is worth a thousand words”. There are also many other different ways how to elicit or present the language and form of a text like, for example, fill in exercises, slash sentences, discussion or even a listening exercise.

Another very natural, easy and frequent technique to prepare for writing is brainstorming. This method is based on collecting and writing down all the information learners know about the theme which helps to show what can be dealt with in the actual piece of writing. Later on, the unnecessary pieces of information are rejected and the rest is organised and ordered in a reasoned way which helps to create the rough outline of the written work.

Brainstorming can as well be used when type of writing task is being discussed. When learners are already acquainted with general rules of writing a particular type of text in L1, for example, writing a letter, they can brainstorm the rules connected with writing a letter.

This technique is also useful to trigger the language needed for the composition because phrases, structures, and vocabulary needed for the task should be reviewed and reinforced before the actual writing. For example, when learners are to write a letter about themselves, several ideas about the content can be elicited along with already known collocations and phrases.

The technique of brainstorming moreover shows the teacher what learners know about the theme and as well their interest in it. The more learners want to contribute and the more ideas appear on the board, the more interested the learners are.

4.3.3 Planning

Afterwards learners prepare the plan for writing, i.e. an outline of ideas, and keep in mind the form in which the text is to be written. The creation of an outline is a huge topic itself. It includes identification of the audience to which learners will write,

of the function of the writing activity and choosing an appropriate tone of learners' compositions based on audience, purpose and situation.

The outline gives learners sense of order which helps them feel safe and work more effectively. Learners should also understand that an outline will help them identify possible errors and gaps in the development of ideas. All these weak points and possible mistakes in organization of ideas can be then prevented before learners start writing a long piece of writing.

4.3.4 Drafting

After all the preparatory stages, the first draft is written. While writing down their ideas, learners follow the outline that they have prepared and the form of the piece of writing that they can see in the possible model version. Learners organise the ideas into a sequence that is understandable for the reader. The end result of this stage is called a "first draft" of the composition that requires further work.

There are more possibilities of working in this phase – learners can write by themselves, in pairs or even in groups. Individual work is very often preferred as the progress in writing of the particular learner is more visible and tangible but other possibilities have also advantages. In groups, learners can come up with ideas they would never find out by themselves, the actual work can be divided according to individual learner's interest, ability or capacity and, moreover, the learners can benefit from collaboration in which they develop valuable social skills. In the practical part of thesis, the group work was applied.

4.3.5 Reviewing

Reviewing refers to the process of editing and revising based on an evaluation of the writing that can be done either by the teacher or by the learners themselves. Evaluation takes quite a lot of time and the one who corrects has to consider what the main aim of the particular composition is.

When evaluation is done by a teacher, Byrne (1988, 123-127) points out several features that should be kept in mind while correcting writing. Firstly, it is important to distinguish between a mistake and an error, since errors cannot be corrected by learners

themselves because the learners do not have the particular linguistic knowledge. Secondly, it should be decided whether the writing task aims to stress accuracy or fluency so that the text would not be full of corrections of all kinds which would inhibit and demotivate learners. In the communicative approach, in general, the process writing focusing on fluency is preferred to the product one. And thirdly, teacher should point out drawbacks of a particular written work but as well point out success. The most effective way of learning is from mistakes and therefore teacher's task in reviewing is to indicate a mistake and for learners to correct it by themselves. This technique was used in the practical project of the thesis.

Therefore, reviewing does not mean a pure correction of all possible mistakes and errors, which may discourage the learners' motivation and their learning process. On the contrary, it should be a positive, encouraging feedback that aims to help learners improve the quality of their work. Reviewing can be also done in the form of a discussion with the teacher, but it is important to encourage peer evaluation too.

Peer editing or "class editing process" helps learners to improve drafts, to understand the process of revision, to see other points of view, discuss them and use error charts effectively. The editing needs a clear focus so that learners can work effectively. On that account, Hadley (1993, 325) recommends to teach learners how to use feedback effectively and to deal with mistake/error chart and codes because there is tendency to make fewer mistakes in further writing.

The format of feedback depends on the purpose of writing. The learners' writing can be complemented with questions and suggestions that will prompt revision. For younger learners who would not be able to correct their writing independently, it is more appropriate to respond with specific remarks that will indicate the strengths and weaknesses for future application. In the project, the individual correction using a guideline for editing and group editing were presented and used in the lesson.

As writing at this stage is still in progress, correcting all the mistakes in a draft would be counter-productive. Therefore, evaluation should achieve two main goals: a) it should leave learners in control of their writing so that they can correct some mistakes on their own, and b) it should help an evaluator to indicate the most important elements of a paper rather than subsidiary details.

4.3.6 Re-writing

Rewriting is a process when learners should reconsider the subject, form and the impact on the audience and also check whether all the sentences and words are correct. This is usually the most demanding task for the learners whose thinking has to move from vague, unfocused ideas to a systematized organization of ideas that can communicate with the reader.

The fifth and sixth stage can sometimes repeat as much as it is needed so that learners can improve their writings until desired perfection. In the very basic structure of writing lesson only this simple guideline can be enough to make learners aware of their main mistakes and of the structure of a text.

4.3.7 Assessing writing

Even though a “process approach” is applied to writing a text, the last piece of writing is given a feedback. This is because a feedback is better than no reaction and learners need to see the purpose and meaning of the whole activity.

In a traditional way, when the reader is a teacher, the feedback is realised via a mark, a commentary and some corrections or suggestions for improvement. There are several ways to evaluate a piece of writing. Perkins (In: Hadley 1993, 327) mentions three possible types. One is holistic scoring that summarizes the whole process in one mark or one commentary. This evaluation might be very subjective as it can overlook a lot of important details; on the other hand, it is quite quick for the evaluator and can be simply made in a form of a letter or a note for a learner. Second scoring is analytical which divides the whole text into logical parts and evaluates them separately. This possibility is more precise and the learners can find out exactly what they should improve about their writing, but it is quite time-demanding for the evaluator. The last one is called “primary trait scoring” and it focuses only on one specifically selected feature that was assigned before writing and all the other aspects are left aside.

In the real world the feedback appears in the form of reply or reaction which is realised in an oral or a written form. Therefore, in order to give writing tasks a sense, it is useful to allow the learners to “publish” their writing and get this kind of feedback in a variety of ways: a class reading, a class board or website. If the learners work on a

product that will be shared with others, their writing will get more importance and the whole process of writing will be meaningfully accomplished. In the practical project the text was written by learners in the form of letter and subsequently it was sent to a recipient – a boy in Africa, a friend of mine who consented to participate in this little project and reacted on the learners' piece of writing in the written way.

This outline of working out a piece of writing pays more attention to the process approach of writing which is stressed mainly in the communicative approach. Anyway, the communicative writing can be also promoted by other techniques than only this structure. These are mentioned in the next part of the thesis.

5 Activities that promote communicative writing

5.1 Communicative approach

Byrne (1988, 23) asserts that in the communicative approach, activities are task-oriented and exchange of information appears whenever possible. In addition, language is used freely and mistakes are not seen negatively but as something natural and rather challenging. Big attention is paid to motivation, personalization and self-expression of learners and this all even at low levels of language knowledge of learners.

Littlewood (1981, 16) divides activities into “pre-communicative” and “communicative”. The former one aims at language forms that a learner learns and the main purpose of activities is “to produce certain language forms in an acceptable way” (ibid). On the contrary, the latter type of activities aims rather at meanings and information that is to be transmitted and understood. The purpose is “to communicate meanings effectively to a partner” (ibid). Littlewood explains that “balance of focus between language forms and meanings is of course a matter of degree, not an all-or-nothing affair” (ibid). Therefore, the main focus in the communicative activities lays on the information communicated and less on the way it is done although both of the poles have to be present at some scale. In the practical part of the thesis the writing lesson starts with the practice of language that is about to be used (a pre-communicative activity) which is followed by the creative part of transmitting specific pieces of information (a communicative activity).

Communicative classroom tasks can be divided into two types, according to Nunan (1989, 40). He distinguishes real-world tasks and pedagogic tasks each having quite different goals. The former ones involve the use of language in the real-world. For example, learners read a letter about a lifestyle of the person who wrote the letter and they should respond to this letter as if they did in reality. On the other hand, the latter ones are accomplished for the purposes of classroom learning, and thus are oriented mainly on skills. This means that learners read the letter and have to answer comprehension-check questions or correct mistakes. These two types of tasks differ in some ways but both are necessary as they develop accuracy (focus on form) and also fluency (focus on the real use of language). The development of the writing skill also partly affects the ability to react and interact. The practical part of the thesis aims mainly at the real-world usage of language as learners are given a letter to which they should react.

In addition, Wright (In: Nunan 1989, 47) suggests that a communicative task should contain at least 2 elements: input data which means all possible materials that the learners can use and initiating questions which instruct learners. The precise results of this kind of tasks are very often unpredictable because learners are given free space to proceed and there are many possible ways to reach the communicative goal. On the other hand, this principle is inspired by the real world – one never knows what can come out of a conversation or activity, what one can find out, experience or just realise. Wright also adds that learners should be involved in task planning and task implementation, which makes the task more realistic for them. In the practical part learners are given a model-letter with all necessary information (input) and via initiating questions that lead them through all the stages of the writing process they complete the task while working in groups.

To sum up, in order to provide the learners clear and effective writing instruction, the teacher should respect the following criteria:

- The sequence of instruction should respect the students' needs; therefore, it should be flexible throughout the whole process of writing.
- The learners should take part in preparing and implementation of a task which would encourage their motivation to finish the task, help them personalize it, become aware of their learning progress which would develop learners' autonomy and connection of the task to their everyday lives.

- The learners should be given enough space and appropriate instruction to stimulate freer expression which would encourage them to actually communicate via writing.
- The focus on all aspects of writing should be balanced. Even if mechanics and organisation are usually taught and practised, attention should be also paid to the theme and style of writing.
- The teacher should use clear criteria for assessing the students' papers so that the feedback can help the students improve their drafts.

5.2 Writing activities

Activities that promote communicative writing can be carried out in various ways. The main principle that the activities should obey is that they should stress purpose, audience and interaction while form and correctness should be left aside. The communicative approach is genuinely about the communication where fluency and rhetorical sensitivity are highlighted.

These activities can encompass looking for some kind of information. To this category information gap activities can be assigned. Learners try to find out key pieces of information so that they could accomplish a task.

Another activity would be writing notes and remarks on small sheets of paper and exchange them which would technically evoke a computer chatting. Learners can write short messages for their classmates and react to messages from them. This kind of activities can be performed in pairs or groups which moreover encourages the student talking time in a lesson.

Moreover, writing activities in groups make the writing easier and more fun for the learners. Therefore, for example, a group correction of written texts should be preferred to the teacher's one. In fact, it serves as a kind of communication in which learners read someone else's text and write notes and remarks which are read by the writers who react on them. The learners should work so in order to understand each other well and to create together an understandable written product.

The communicative writing activities can be also done via long-term projects which would take more time and therefore would allow the learners to process each phase of writing and communicating profoundly and realise the purpose and usefulness of each stage in the writing process.

As an important aspect of communication is purposefulness, the writing should be preferably published somehow. It can be put on a classroom wall, on a wall in a school corridor or the pieces of writing can be as well sent to a local journal or to some writing competition. The texts can even be displayed on the Internet. There are many sites on the Internet that provide this service but the products can be as well published on school website showing the creativity and imagination of the learners or on class blogs or social networks. This is in fact the most used way to publish something all over the world – writing on social networks like Facebook, Twitter or blogs. A lot of people of different age, opinions and mastery of the English language do this everyday so why not doing it in an EFL class.

Since the tasks should be realistic and relevant to the learners, it does not mean that they cannot be linked with the classroom and lesson activities. Teacher can communicate with learners in English via e-mails and learner diaries in which they discuss homework, in-class activity, feelings about tasks or reflections of projects etc.

To these examples of activities writing a letter can be add. This was the main aim of the practical project and therefore the process will be explained in detail in the next part of the thesis.

6 Hypothesis

On the basis of the theoretical findings presented in the theoretical part of the diploma thesis, the following hypothesis can be stated: Integrating writing activities that promote interaction and communication, and that simulate real-life situations (are authentic) in EFL lessons can help develop learners' writing skills and increase their involvement in learning.

PRACTICAL PART

1 Design of the project

According to the theoretical findings and the aims of the research, the following criteria for designing activities and tasks were formulated. The activities should

- motivate learners with the topics and tasks.
- be sequenced logically following a simple linear plan of writing lessons.
- simulate real-life situations.
- provide reasons for communication and self-expression by answering to a letter from a boy living in Africa (Mamadou living in Mali).
- offer enough space for learners to work creatively in groups.
- enable learners to experience success.

In the project mainly two approaches were used: first of all, the classroom activities were guided by the communicative approach emphasizing meaningful interaction and secondly, selected aspects of the process approach to teaching writing were applied.

Based on the chosen approaches, some special materials were used in the classroom. These were primarily a model-text and teacher-developed guidelines for peer and self-editing.

Evaluation of the project was done by means of observations of classroom work, feedback on individual tasks and reflections after each writing lesson. In addition, discussions were held with the mentor-teacher as well as with the learners. The aim of the discussions was to find out how much the activities helped to motivate the learners and support their positive attitude towards learning.

2 Description of the class

The project was realized in the ninth class at the Basic School Oblačná in Liberec, therefore the learners' age ranged from 14 to 15 years. The whole class was divided into two classes one of which was involved in the research. Since some of the learners were missing, the total amount of the learners working on the project was 10.

The class could be divided into three basic groups. One group consists of the most active learners that were highly motivated to learn and curious to find out new

things. They co-operated with the teacher and with each other, asked questions and worked creatively. The work on the project interested them very much. They contributed to discussions and group work a lot and on all stages of the project they seemed very motivated.

The second group of the class was rather neutral in their behaviour as they were not markedly talkative or active during the lessons. Their results in English lessons in general were rather ordinary and their interest for English language lessons was not much noticeable as their reactions to class tasks and activities were rather sporadic. However, during the work on the project they seemed more interested in learning than usually and when the real-life purpose of the task was mentioned, their creativity and readiness to work increased perceptibly.

The last group of the class could be characterized as inactive. They were not very interested in anything that was going on in the classroom, cooperated seldom and if they did, then their cooperation lacked interest and involvement. The work on the project did not interest them significantly at the beginning but when they found out that they were writing to a real person who would answer them their curiosity and creativity increased noticeably.

3 Description of individual activities

The project was realised in two lessons and parts of other two lessons. In the first lesson, a model-letter and a sender of the letter were introduced to the learners – where he lives, what are the conditions of his life and some basic characteristics about his land were mentioned. Next lesson, the learners were divided into groups and each group was working on one part of the reply letter dealing with one particular theme. The following lesson was dedicated to the re-writing of the learners' first drafts with help of a guideline for editing. In the same lesson all the learners put their texts together to form one big letter and organised it according to the principles of writing letters that were presented in the model-letter. Finally, the final version of the letter, following necessary structural rules, was created and sent via e-mail as an answer to the boy, who had sent the first letter. The last part was dedicated to the analysis of the reply coming from the boy and to the discussion with the learners.

3.1 Lesson plans

Lesson plan format: 1

Date: 29th September 2011

School: ZŠ Oblačná, Liberec 5

Grade: 9th grade

Goal: revision of a test / finishing a topic “Bullying” / introduction to writing a letter

Learning Objectives: The learners will learn from the mistakes they made in the test, they will be able to explain their mistakes. / They will be able to discuss thoroughly the topic bullying. / The learners will be able to understand the purpose of writing the letter which forms a significant part of the project.

Purpose / Rationale (putting the lesson in a wider context): The test was written last lesson and a few previous lessons were dedicated to the topic bullying (this is the last lesson). / The presentation of the model-letter serves as a starting point of the process of writing a letter that will continue within two following lessons.

Assumed knowledge / anticipated problem: The learners are familiar with vocabulary referring to the topic “bullying”, which was proved in the test; therefore, they will be able to read about, listen to and discuss the topic. The introduction of the new topic of writing should not be a problem for them as they should have at least general knowledge about Africa and about English grammar and writing a letter in general.

Materials: test exercise books, a tape recorder and a recording, a student's book, a model-letter

Time: 45 minutes

Procedure:

Timing

*** Stage 1: Revision of the test**

10 min

* Aim: The learners will be aware of their mistakes and understand the right forms.

- a) Write mistakes on a board and discuss the right forms
- b) Open of text exercise books and correction
- c) Write marks into learners' register books

*** Stage 2: Finishing the topic bullying**

20 min

* Aim: The learners will be able to understand texts and recording, they will be able to respond thematic questions and react appropriately.

- a) Read a text about bullying and answer concept check questions
- b) Listen to a story of one bullied girl
- c) Discussion dealing with understanding of the recording and of the story

*** Stage 3: Introduction into writing a letter**

15 min

* Aim: The learners will be able to understand the background of the writer; the learners will get acquainted with the model-letter; the learners will be motivated towards the writing task.

- a) Short brainstorming of Africa, introduce the land of the writer (Mali), writer's basic characteristics
- b) Work with the model-letter: make the right forms of verbs, nouns and prepositions (the first paragraph done in the lesson)
- c) Read the beginning of the model-letter and discussion about the content

Homework: Rewrite the letter using correct forms of words and phrases.
What would you like to ask Mamadou?

Reflection

Only the last stage of the lesson was dedicated to the project, therefore only this will be analysed and reflected on in this analysis.

The introduction of the project was a stage that aimed to get the learners acquainted with the topic and to attract their attention. It was achieved mainly by means of a change of activity because this always challenges the atmosphere in a classroom and makes the learners more aware. The change was realised via an activity that did not origin from a textbook, like the majority of activities done in the classroom.

At the beginning of the topic, the funnel method was used – treating the topic from the very general area to the most specific one. Without any specific introduction I started the topic immediately without any explanation which aimed to encourage the learners' curiosity and motivation. Dealing with general knowledge of Africa was for the learners so surprising and mutually so motivating that even the learners who usually did not react very often were eager to tell what they knew. They must have been curious to know what this all was about and this boosted their extrinsic motivation. The inactive group of learners did not respond hastily but they paid a lot of attention to what was going on, which I was able to observe as they were not doing anything else - like looking around or working on something else.

The specification of the topic to Mali, the country of the writer, was for the learners also interesting as they were trying to say something about the country. However, they did not know much about it or even people living there. After I gave the learners general information about Mali specifying where the country is located and what the geographical characteristics of the place are, the presentation of the idea of writing a letter had its turn. All eyes were fixed on me as the learners were still trying to find out what exactly was going on.

This introductory part of the project was an important stage of writing a letter as the learners were able to learn the Mamadou's social background and learn some specifics of the “sociocultural rules”. Moreover, it was clear for the learners that they were to write an informal letter as Mamadou was presented like a friend. The purpose of writing was stated in this introductory lesson so that the learners could understand what they were to do and could stay focused and motivated all the time. The knowledge of audience (Mamadou) and the purpose of writing helped the learners to enhance their rhetorical sensitivity.

After a short presentation of the project that the learners would be working on next two lessons, they were given a model-letter. They all were eager to get the text and read it. Even though the understanding of the letter did not cause any serious problems, the word forms in the letter were purposefully only in their basic forms and had to be put in the right form. This was done so that the learners' attention can be focused on the grammatical forms they would use in their own texts. Important aspect of this task was that it had to be manageable for them referring to the learners' language level.

That was the first work with the model-letter. As there was not much time in the lesson, only the first paragraph was done individually and corrected together in the classroom and the rest was assigned as homework.

The model-letter was written in slash sentences, which means that the words appeared in the right word order but only in the basic form and they were divided by slashes. For example: "My/name/be/Mamadou Thiam". Some words were left out but from the context it was clear what was missing as it was done mainly in well-known phrases (26 "years" old, I come "from" Mali). There were also conjunctions that were left out but they were indicated by underscores so it was quite easy to guess what was missing. The correction of forms in general was for many learners quite demanding since they overlooked quite a lot of forms that had to be rewritten and did not correct them. This happened in spite of the fact that the first paragraph was illustratively done in the lesson with the whole class so that the learners knew what the home assignment was.

Here is the version that the learners obtained and worked with:

Hello. My/name/be/Mamadou Thiam. I/come/Mali, I/be/26/old. I/not have got/a wife/child/_ _
_ /I/have got/a young-wife-friend. Her/name/be/Diarako Sissoko. She/be/17/old/_ _ _/be/a
student/the 12th class.

I/be/a German teacher/the National Guide of Tourism/Mali. I/have got/3/brother/_ _ _/1/sister.
My father/be/Ousmane Thiam/_ _ _/my mother/Aminata Tall. We/live/Kati. It/be/a small
country/near the capital city/Mali/Bamako.

In my free time, I/play/cards with my friend/_ _/we/drink/tea/_ _ _/discuss a lot/Europe/_
_/_world politics. At night/we/usually dance/_ _/ drink African beer.

Mali/be/a land/in the West Africa/_ _ _/be/divided in/8 regions plus district of Bamako.
Mali/be/a democratic land/under the rule of/Dr Alpha Oumar Konare/since June 8, 1992.
It/be/an underdeveloped country/with/13,4 million/people. Almost/36/language/be/spoken/here!

In a family/a father/have/very often/3 or 4/wife/_ _ _/they/live together/with a grandfather, a grandmother, an uncle, an aunt... Our family (plural)/have/about/10 to 15/member. The wife (plural)/work/very often/in the family. Many/child/not go/to/school, only 47%/all/child/who/be/7-15/old.

Mali/be/a wonderful land/_ _ _/be/really worth seeing.

If you/be/interested, I can/give/you/more information/about/me/_ _ _/my/country. I/be/looking forward/to your letter.

Yours sincerely, Mamadou Thiam

Conclusion

What was learnt in these activities was mainly the purpose and aim of the project. All stages that aimed to provide context and reason for the learners' further work on a letter were explicitly highlighted to the learners and the real-life meaning was emphasised.

During the whole part of lesson, the learners were motivated due to the sequence of pieces of information that were gradually revealed to them. The learners were not able to put the pieces together in a meaningful whole until I explicitly explained the project. The extrinsic motivation remained even after revealing the purpose of the project, which was enhanced by presentation of a real African boy longing to communicate with the learners in English.

The authenticity of the project gave the whole work a particular purpose. In addition, it ensured that the character of the consequent writing would be not only real-life based but mainly communicative.

Working on correcting mistakes was mainly aimed to show the learners that even the language used in an informal letter must accomplish certain standards. This was presented to the learners via the detailed reading and examining the form of the model-letter. The primary characteristic of the activity was that dealing with the form of

the letter had to be manageable for the learners, since working on a structure was a completely new issue for them.

This part of the project served as an introduction to the genuine writing that was practised in the following lessons. The basis was created in this lesson – the context within which the concrete writing would start.

Lesson plan format: 2

Date: Friday, 30th September 2011

School: ZŠ Oblačná, Liberec 5

Grade: 9th grade

Goal: organization of groups according to themes and creation of the first drafts of texts

Learning Objectives: The learners will be able to agree on themes and co-operate in groups in order to write their first drafts of texts.

Purpose / Rationale (putting the lesson in a wider context): This lesson is the first out of two whole-class lessons dedicated to writing the letter. The introduction to the activity was done in the previous lesson.

Assumed knowledge / anticipated problem: The learners are already familiar with the model-letter, the information in it and the language that is used. / The learners may have problems with division into groups, choosing a theme or co-operation. However, I assume they will make no unnecessary troubles as they are quite mature in this point of view. They may not know vocabulary they would like to use, which will be overcome via dictionaries and help from teacher acting as an observer and helper.

Materials: a model-letter, a whiteboard, markers, sheets of paper or exercise books

Time: 45 minutes

Procedure:

Timing

*** Stage 1: Checking the home assignment**

13 min

* Aim: The learners will be aware of the language in letters which should follow certain standards.

- a) Read the letters with correct forms
- b) Discuss the right forms
- c) Discuss information contained in the letter

*** Stage 2: Creation of the outline of the answer to the model-letter**

10 min

* Aim: The learners will be aware of the logical sequence of the letter and will make the basis for their texts that should be written consistently and meaningfully.

- a) Create a mental map of information included in the model-letter
- b) Create the outline of the answer letter according to the model-letter
- c) Divide ideas into three main topics and divide of the learners into three groups

*** Stage 3: Creative group work on the answer-letter**

22 min

* Aim: The learners will discuss ideas with their peers in a group so that they can create together a meaningful piece of writing; the learners will compose their first drafts of the letter in groups applying a correct structure of a letter.

- a) Give the learners an outline of the reply (reaction, the main message, possible questions)
- b) Present a possible answer made by the teacher
- c) The learners work on their own in groups. The teacher plays the roles of an observer and helper

Reflection

At home the learners had worked out the right version of the model-letter and found out more information about Mamadou. At the beginning of this lesson, the learners read their corrected letters and the whole class discussed the mistakes that remained in the texts and possible options of correction. After this stage, the learners become aware of the fact that a letter should be correctly written and also realised a common content of a letter. The next stage helped them to be aware of the structure of the letter.

The learners discussed with me what they found out about the boy. The discussion was simultaneously transformed into a mental map on a whiteboard so that all the learners could clearly see what information was at their disposal. Based on this visual prompt, the content of the response was explained, demonstrated and discussed. Out of this map the topics for writing the reply letter emerged: the introduction of our country, our lifestyle and our free time in contrast to the one in Mali. These themes are the same as in the model-letter and they were chosen because the letter was basically meant as a reply, a reaction.

Mainly the active and usually rather neutral part of the class took part in the discussion when they were trying to add some new ideas that were not yet written on the whiteboard. The inactive part of the class was observing the activities in the first part of the lesson and talked only when I directly asked for their opinions. However, as the activity was based on discovery rather than direct explanation, all the learners were involved in the activity and followed attentively discussion.

The third stage was the core of the lesson because the learners creatively worked on the construction of the reply letter. They followed the process writing procedure of the simple linear plan of writing. In this lesson the first stages of the plan were pursued, i.e. choice of themes, pre-writing, planning and drafting.

The learners were divided into three groups of three to four learners and each group chose a topic out of the ones that had arisen while discussing the content of the model-letter.

Before the actual creation of the first draft, the basic outline for all groups was stated. All the groups had a task to create their own outlines consisting of three parts. In the first part, the learners had to react to the part of the model-letter that concerned the group's topic. In the second part, the learners had to develop the themes they had prepared in the groups by adding some more information about the Czech Republic or

their own lifestyle and, in the last stage, they could ask some relevant questions. This outline was written on the whiteboard and made visible to all groups.

After the themes were stated for each group and the outline was set for all the groups, the learners started their work. Firstly, the learners discussed and brainstormed their individual topics in groups. Afterwards, they modified their ideas into the general outline and started to write in their school exercise books. There was always one learner in one group who was writing and the rest was helping her/him by telling what to write and how.

In this part learners' target language proficiency played a big role as they had to compose the text in English. Since the learners were in the last grade of lower secondary school, their command of language to express ideas was sufficient enough so that the learners were able to communicate in English quite freely with occasional help of dictionaries and from the teacher.

In this stage of the project the learners had to apply organizational and stylistic rules, which encompass the usage of standard forms and typical structure of a letter and they had to respect the purpose, audience and context of the writing task.

In this part, the learners also realized the differences of the cultural background. When they had to write how it works in their motherland and compared it to Mali, they became much more culturally aware compared to the situation when they only read the model-letter. This interesting aspect was amplified by means of presentation of a photograph of Mamadou, which encouraged even the most inactive learners to participate actively because they could see that this task was really authentic and their letter would be later sent, received and read.

With my help, all the groups of the students finished their replies and handed them in. They were informed that next lesson they would get feedback and would tailor their final texts (see Appendix B).

Conclusion

What the learners learnt in the lesson was mainly how to use phrases and language in general in letters, i.e. the usage of conjunctions, prepositions and basic phrases, which was practised in the previous lesson. They could also practise the structural composition of a text and realise suitable content.

The learners' work was sequenced logically, following a simple linear plan for writing lessons. The learners began with the specification of themes and then they brainstormed ideas in groups to have a language preparation for writing. They created outlines, which helped them keep track of information they wanted to include in the letter, and they worked out their first drafts.

The learners' self-expression and free work were ensured via discussion of the topics, free work in groups and usage of the language the learners wanted and needed to use. In this part of the project, the teacher was playing the role of an observer and helper.

The motivation remained high since the previous lesson but the motivation of the inactive part of the learners started fading slowly. Although some of them were visibly more active than usually while working in the group, the motivation was further enhanced mainly by the presentation of a photo of Mamadou, the receiver of their letter. This ensured the learners that this activity was not just another “textbook-like” meaningless one but that this activity was really authentic and aimed at real communication.

As the communication was the main aim of the project, several aspects had to be accomplished in this stage of the project. One of them is that the activity had to have a certain purpose, which was accomplished by the authenticity of the task and a real-world receiver of the letter. Another feature is turn-taking, where the writer and reader change their roles proportionately in order to exchange their ideas, and the last is sociocultural rules, in which writers are aware of cultural backgrounds of the receiver and differences of their personal one. These rules were not explicitly stated but they were implicitly included in the model-letter, which style and language the learners imitated.

Lesson plan format: 3

Date: Monday, 3rd October 2011

School: ZŠ Oblačná, Liberec 5

Grade: 9th grade

Goal: reviewing and re-writing the first drafts, composing the final version of the letters and sending the letter via e-mail

Learning Objectives: The learners will be able to rewrite their first drafts according to the guideline for editing, put their texts together and organize the ideas in one letter.

Purpose / Rationale (putting the lesson in a wider context): This lesson is a logical stage of the project which comes after the creation of first drafts and before sending the texts organised in one letter.

Assumed knowledge / anticipated problem: All the needed knowledge was consolidated during the work on the model-letter: the organisation, the phrases and the style. These have already been covered in the previous lesson; therefore, I do not assume any obstacles in the learners' knowledge needed for this lesson. / The learners may not be able to work with the guideline for editing as it may be complicated for them. Therefore I will be there to explain possible doubts. Several errors which the learners would not be able to correct may occur; therefore I will be there at learners' disposal to help them with corrections. Otherwise the class is very skilful, that is why I do not assume any serious problems in composition of the final version of the letter.

Materials: a model-letter, a whiteboard, markers, sheets of paper or exercise books, guideline for editing, e-mail client

Time: 45 minutes

Procedure:

Timing

*** Stage 1: Reviewing the first drafts**

20 min

* Aim: The learners will learn to edit their own texts in groups with help of a guideline for editing.

- a) Teacher presents the guideline, explains the symbols
- b) The learners work in groups and edit their work
- c) Teacher acts as a helper and observer

*** Stage 2: Composing the final version of the letter**

15-20

min

* Aim: The learners will put all their texts together to form a meaningful and logical piece of writing.

- a) The learners read their parts and decide how to organise texts in one letter
- b) According to the model-letter the learners make up the introduction and closing of the letter
- c) The learners write the final version on a computer

*** Stage 3: Discussion**

5-10

min

* Aim: The learners reflect on their work, feelings, the project etc.

- a) Teacher asks whether the learners liked the activity, what they liked/did not like, what they would change
- b) The learners reflect on their work, feelings, motivation, they explain their ideas
- c) The learners ask questions about the project and Mamadou
- d) The learners talk about penfriends they have had

Reflection

Before the third lesson, I reviewed the first drafts of the texts and marked the mistakes and errors that the learners had made. I only determined the place where they occurred and hinted the type of mistake it was. The rest of editing – correcting the mistakes – was done in this lesson.

The learners worked out very nice letters where their creativity turned out (see Appendix D). The evidence of their interest and motivation was very well visible in the questions they wrote in the letters and even in their active and lively participation during the lesson when the letter was being created.

Although several grammatical mistakes appeared in the texts, it did not inhibit the primary aim of communication, which is a transmission of ideas. Therefore, the editing part was dedicated mainly to grammatical aspects of writing so that the right understanding would not be affected at all.

The organization and structure of ideas in the texts was in all texts satisfactory. On the other hand, some learners were not able to keep the track of ideas and jumped quickly from one topic to another without using any conjunctions that would help understanding. In spite of this fact, the main idea of their texts remained clear and therefore no serious obstacles occurred while communicating the idea.

In the lesson, the learners used the guidelines to improve their first drafts. The guideline for editing was projected on the whiteboard. It is a chart consisted of symbols and their explanation. Each symbol stood for one type of mistake, for example the symbol “S” stood for spelling, so the word had to be rewritten in the correct form. Therefore the learners were able to decipher the meaning of symbols that I had used in their texts and they were able to correct their mistakes in groups. The guideline can be seen in Appendix C.

Working with the guideline for editing did not cause many problems for the learners as they immediately knew what their mistakes were and were able to correct them in groups. If one learner did not know, the others offered help right away. Only after the other learners in a group did not know, the teacher came and helped the group. But this did not happen very often.

After the texts were corrected, the last stage of creation of the reply letter was dedicated to the construction of one long letter. The three themes were ordered logically – from the most general one to the most specific one following the structure of the model-letter. Therefore, the first part of the letter was the one dealing with the Czech

Republic, then the one dealing with family followed and the one handling the free time was closing the letter.

Afterwards, it was necessary to rewrite the texts on a computer which should have taken place in a computer classroom. Nevertheless, as it was unexpectedly occupied, the learners wrote their letters on one computer that was available in the classroom. While one group was writing their part of the letter, the rest was discussing and reflecting on their work and feelings about the project.

After rewriting the parts of the letter, the whole class constructed the greeting and closing of the letter with the help of the model-letter, in which the structure was visible. It was done on the computer which screen was projected on the whiteboard; therefore, all the learners were able to see it and co-operate. Afterwards, I asked whether they would like to add anything else or modify somehow the final version of the letter. After all desired modifications, the letter was saved in one word document.

As the project was aimed at interpersonal written communication transmitted by means of electronic devices, the reply was immediately sent via e-mail as an attachment. Thus, the principle of turn-taking was fulfilled, which basically means that participants of communication change roles of a source-writer and a receiver-reader. At first, the learners were in the position of receiver-reader and then they took the active role of a source-writer.

In the following discussion some of the learners were asking more questions about Mamadou, whether he would answer and when, what he is like etc. This project really appealed to all of the learners significantly. In addition, the topic of penfriends was mentioned and I asked whether the learners already had had experience with this kind of written communication. They answered that some time ago they were writing to a penfriend living in the Philippines, which surprised me. On the other hand, this explained how it was possible that the learners were able to use their written language so efficiently and skilfully.

Conclusion

The learners learnt in this lesson to edit their work and compose a final version of a letter. They realized that reviewing, self-correction and rewriting is a common part of a writing process, which makes the final written text more organised and understandable.

The standards of writing a letter were mentioned and practised as the learners created the greeting and closing of the letter. It was accomplished via brainstorming and analysis of the model-letter as it was expected that on their level the learners know what a letter looks like.

This lesson was focused on the last stages of the simple linear plan of writing, i.e. reviewing and re-writing. Both stages ran smoothly and all the learners were participating actively and had no serious problems with the accomplishment of the tasks.

All the learners were very excited about writing the letter and were highly motivated by the fact that their final version would be sent to a concrete person and therefore participated actively and contributed to the group work.

The learners were focused the whole lesson and worked consciously on their texts. Nobody was out of the process of reviewing and re-writing, all participated proportionately as the groups were not too big; therefore, everyone could be active. If a problem or a discrepancy during the learners' writing occurred, it was quickly solved.

The learners had enough time to work out their texts in the groups which could be supported by the fact that all groups finished their texts in time and that the texts were logical in sequence and meaning.

The main part of the real-life task was brought to its end successfully. The learners sent their finished letter and awaited the reply.

Lesson plan format: 4

Date: Friday, 14th October 2011

School: ZŠ Oblačná, Liberec 5

Grade: 9th grade

only one part of the lesson (stage 2) is dedicated to the project

Goal: correction of a test / reading of the reply to the letter / listening to a story

Learning objectives: The learners will learn from their mistakes made in the test. / The learners will react to the Mamadou's answer. / The learners will be able to understand the listening in general and in detail and discuss the topic.

Purpose / Rationale of stage 2 (putting the lesson in a wider context): This lesson is the last one dedicated to writing the letter as the learners receive answer to their letter.

Assumed knowledge / anticipated problem related to stage 2: The learners are already familiar with the project and a part of this lesson is only dedicated to reading and oral reaction to the letter. / The learners may be disappointed that not all of their questions were answered. However, this happens as well in the real life.

Materials for stage 2: an answer-letter from Mamadou, a whiteboard, markers, sheets of paper or exercise books

Time: 45 minutes

Procedure:

Timing

*** Stage 1: Correction of the test**

10 min

* Aim: The learners will learn from their own mistakes and will be able to explain them.

- a) Write mistakes on a board and discuss the right forms
- b) Open text exercise books and correction
- c) Write marks into learners' register books

*** Stage 2: Reading the answer form Mamadou**

10 min

* Aim: The learners get reaction to their letter.

- a) Introduce reading the answer (what the learners remember)
- b) Read the letter
- c) Discuss the answer

*** Stage 3: Listening to a story**

25 min

* Aim: The learners will be able to understand the text and react to it.

- a) Global listening
- b) Answer the concept-check questions in student's books
- c) Work with the story and pictures

Reflection

Only one stage of the lesson was dedicated to the project, therefore only this will be analysed and reflected on in this analysis.

The answer coming from Mamadou is the last part of the project that aimed at written communication. To remind this particular process of turn-taking, Mamadou wrote a letter; then the learners, as a whole class, replied via e-mail and finally Mamadou replied to the class letter. The learners learnt to write, edit their texts, work on their written products and moreover communicate ideas in L2 in the written way.

As the project was all the time authentic and aimed at simulation of the real-life situations, the learners were all paying attention and were eager to co-operate. This lesson was the climax of the whole project for the learners as they were able to see that their effort was worth it and they were able to see the results of their hard work and to experience success.

The reading of the answer was shortly introduced by a reminder of what the learners remembered about the project, all the stages and ideas they had expressed in the letter. This was done because the learners wrote the letter eleven days ago and they might not have remembered the details.

The reading itself was for the learners very interesting as all of them were eager to find out how Mamadou responded to their questions. All eyes were pointed at the board where the letter was projected. One of the learners read it aloud and a discussion followed.

In the discussion the learners asked again about Mamadou, they analysed what he had written and reacted upon it orally. They found out more information about Mamadou, his lifestyle and found out answers to some of their questions.

Afterwards the final discussion took place. The last discussion about the project had followed the sending of the reply-letter which was eleven days ago so there may be distance from the immediate feelings of finishing the letter. Regardless, the learners kept being positive about the project and found the project not only interesting but very practical and useful.

At the end of the project the learners were given Mamadou's e-mail address and a possibility to meet him on a social network and were encouraged to contact him outside the classroom. This was of course done with the approval from Mamadou.

Conclusion

The learners learnt that communication has its goal and purpose and they realized that the effort they had made was worth it. The learners could again realize that writing letters requires knowledge of certain rules that should be applied and that communicative writing consists of turn-taking which reflects and reacts to the previous message.

Ten minutes were dedicated to the final discussion dealing with the analysis and reactions to the Mamadou's letter and with the reflection of the whole project. The learners were at first asked several questions dealing with understanding of the letter and were asked to react on it orally. The following overall discussion was based on following questions and the learners were supposed to add some explanation and arguments for their answers: Did you like the project? Which part of the project was the best for you? Which part was the most complicated for you? What did you dislike about the project? What activities seemed meaningless to you? Did you learn anything new? What? Would you be afraid of using English in written communication, .e.g. on the Internet in chats etc.?

Even in the last stage of the project the learners stayed highly motivated and were eager to read the answer to their letter. The following discussion also proved that their interest was real and that their motivation became intrinsic and not only aimed at external source of praise. Even the inactive learners sitting at the back seats were stretching their necks to be able to read the answer from Mamadou. This could be ascribed to the fact that the learners made every effort to create the letter.

In this phase of the project, the learners were able to see the tangible results of their efforts. The reaction coming from Mamadou was the most interesting and motivating part of the project for the learners as they saw that the effort they gave to the project was worth it and that they succeeded finally. It took a little more time for the answer to come but the learners got it and therefore the circle of changing of the roles was closed. All's well that ends well.

Conclusion

The aim of the project was to find out whether inclusion of activities that promote communicative writing in EFL lessons can contribute to the learners' development of writing skills and at the same time to improve the knowledge of the English language in general. The project, during which the learners were practising strategies of the “process writing”, proved that:

The implementation of the process writing approach contributes to the development of the writing skills and also enhances the learners' engagement in writing and their positive attitude towards learning in general. During the project, the learners were active all the time, managed to accomplish all the deadlines, their texts were written in the appropriate style and information included in their letter was organised in a meaningful way. The learners' systematic work on writing aimed to demonstrate that writing is a continual work of refinement of a text until the final piece of writing is created. The particular stages made the learners aware of what is necessary to keep in mind while producing a logical piece of writing and they also experienced that the whole process was worth undergoing. The end product was readable, grammatically correct and it obeyed discourse conventions, which Nunan (1989, 36) emphasises as an important characteristic for the final product in the process of writing. The learners' texts can be observed in Appendix D at the end of the thesis.

Further, during the project it was proven that a model text is a suitable aid while introducing a writing task. The strength of this technique is that an appropriate model text clearly presents to the learners the form and content of a piece of writing and therefore the learners feel safe and secure while writing as they can imitate the content of the text in case they are not sure how to continue. On the other hand, the presentation of a model text enhances a non-manipulative writing and encourages the learners to use their creativity and potential.

In addition, non-manipulative writing was reinforced via small group discussions which were held prior to and during the writing activities. Techniques like brainstorming and discussions allowed the learners to enlarge their personal knowledge of the topic, put the ideas in specific order and co-operate in production of the final version of the letter. Moreover, the highly personalised goal of the writing task increased the learners' motivation.

The necessary prerequisite for the practice of the communicative writing is the language readiness of learners. In the project, the Ls were in the last grade of the lower secondary school and for that reason their language level was high enough to accomplish the project goals. That's why they were able to communicate in writing without any big complications. Actually, they did not go beyond their actual knowledge of the English language which would have inhibited their motivation and consequently creativity.

Furthermore, the project also confirmed that communicative writing can take place only on condition that the writing task has a purpose. This was ensured via writing a letter to a real-world recipient. The learners knew that they would be writing a letter to a real person, the final product of their writing would be finally sent to him, and that their efforts would be rewarded by receiving a reply.

Another two fundamental aspects of understandable written communication, defined by Harmer (2002, 247), were observed and practised. Firstly, sociocultural rules referring to the use of appropriate level and kind of language while communicating with people of different social and professional status; secondly, turn-taking which means changing the roles of the sender and receiver. The Ls were exposed to the Mamadou's writing style, which was then partly imitated, and the roles of the sender and writer were exchanged three times. The learners had known all the time that their reply would be sent to a real recipient, which resulted in their increased motivation for learning and co-operation.

Although the writing task was realised via e-mail, which means in the way of the One-to-One Communication, the learners had an opportunity to realise the form and the structure of a typical letter. The basic rules of the Netiquette were also observed, e.g. stating the subject of the e-mail and writing a clear signature. A level of intimacy, i.e. formality and style, were appropriate to the situation as was already mentioned above.

It has been found out that the process writing approach can be modified according to the needs of the learners. Even though only a simple plan of writing stages was introduced in the project, the learners were able to realise that writing is a work in progress that consists of repeated modifications of the text. The whole procedure of the writing process was carried out according to the steps and principles mentioned in the methodological part, for example, group discussions and a personalized purpose of writing. This allowed all the learners to create meaningful and organised pieces of writing.

In the simple linear plan of process writing, two stages appeared that were new or difficult for the learners. The first stage that was new was the stage of reviewing with requirement of editing and the work with a guideline for editing. So far, the learners had not had a chance to read, correct and improve their writing and were used to the fact that first drafts must have been the final ones. Therefore, they were surprised when they were asked to check their letters in order to improve them. On the other hand, although the learners had not been explicitly acquainted with the guideline before the introduction of this activity, working with the guideline did not cause them any serious problems. The guideline for editing was very well understood as it contained standardised symbols used for correcting. For that reason, the correction itself did not take much time and the learners got used to using the guideline very quickly.

The latter stage that appeared to be the most demanding and complicated for the learners was the stage of re-writing. In this stage the learners had to reconsider the form, content and suitability of the text, which was quite a complex activity. On the other hand, this specific activity was accomplished in the co-operative way and the learners overcame the difficulties as teams. Working in groups proved to be a good decision as the learners could help each other in case they were not sure what exactly needed to be corrected and improved. The results can be seen in Appendix D.

Finally, during the research several ideas for modification of the project emerged. The first thing to mention is sufficient amount of time for practising writing. Some stages were only quickly flown through and thus the learners were maybe not aware of the asset of the stage. Also, for the last two stages of reviewing and rewriting more time could have been offered to the learners so that they could experience more in depth the whole process of writing. The only opportunity for the learners to evaluate their products and then improve them cannot confirm that all the learners really grasped the procedure of communicative writing.

Adjusting a writing task as a long-term project in which the learners would have more time to communicate with the recipient of the letter might be also worth investigating. Then the development of the writing skills would be more complex and beneficial for the learners. Another direction could have been to focus on different types of reviewing, i.e. self-reviewing, peer-reviewing and thus to show the learners that they would be able to correct their writing on their own. This would not only help the learners improve their writing skills, but also boost their autonomy.

Based on the findings obtained from reflections and the learners' outcomes it can be concluded that the assumptions stated in the hypothesis were proven in the practical part of the project. If learners are aware of a specific goal of an activity and see the purpose of it, their involvement in learning is higher and therefore their attitude to learning English improves and strengthens. The task, which was linked to the real-life situation of communicative online writing, was motivating for the learners the whole time when the project was held. Their feedback and reactions were all the time enthusiastic and generally rather positive.

To conclude, communicative writing should be a common part of an English lesson, because, as the research proved, it promotes correctness and fluency, improves written discourse and gives learning a sense.

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List of appendices

Appendix A: the model-letter

Appendix B: first drafts

Appendix C: the guideline for editing

Appendix D: the final version of the reply-letter

Appendix E: the reply from Mamadou

Appendix A

Hello. My/name/be/Mamadou Thiam. I/come/Mali, I/be/26/old. I/not have got/a wife/child/_ _
_ /I/have got/a young-wife-friend. Her/name/be/Diarako Sissoko. She/be/17/old/_ _ _/be/a
student/the 12th class.

I/be/a German teacher/the National Guide of Tourism/Mali. I/have got/3/brother/_ _ _/1/sister.
My father/be/Ousmane Thiam/_ _ _/my mother/Aminata Tall. We/live/Kati. It/be/a small
country/near the capital city/Mali/Bamako.

In my free time, I/play/cards with my friend/_ _ _/we/drink/tea/_ _ _/discuss a lot/Europe/_
_ _/world politics. At night/we/usually dance/_ _ _/ drink African beer.

Mali/be/a land/in the West Africa/_ _ _/be/divided in/8 regions plus district of Bamako.
Mali/be/a democratic land/under the rule of/Dr Alpha Oumar Konare/since June 8, 1992.
It/be/an underdeveloped country/with/13,4 million/people. Almost/36/language/be/spoken/here!

In a family/a father/have/very often/3 or 4/wife/_ _ _/they/live together/with a grandfather, a
grandmother, an uncle, an aunt... Our family (plural)/have/about/10 to 15/member. The wife
(plural)/work/very often/in the family. Many/child/not go/to/school, only
47%/all/child/who/be/7-15/old.

Mali/be/a wonderful land/_ _ _/be/really worth seeing.

If you/be/interested, I can/give/you/more information/about/me/_ _ _/my/country. I/be/looking
forward/to your letter.

Yours sincerely, Mamadou Thiam

Appendix B

Group with Kateřina, Kristýna and Lukáš

Hi, ~~my name is~~ our names are Kristýna, Kočka, Lukáš. Kočka has 5 brothers and sisters. Kristýna has ~~as~~ 1 sister. And we have got 1 brother. By us live children to twenty years. And by you? By us mums ~~and~~ an ~~mother~~. And by Kristýna mums a father and mother, too. And by Kočka mums ~~parents~~ too. Are your parents mums? Oh, typical names by girls are Tereza, Nikola, Eliška, and by boys are Tomáš, Martin, Honza. ~~What~~ What are typical names in Mohi? In our country school starts at 7:55. And how it's in your country?

Group with Lenka, Eliška, Nikol and Lucie

In our class every girl in free time dance. Street dance. Also we go to the cinema and to the Theatre. And we like shopping. ~~On~~ ^{on} Friday at night we go to the disco ~~and~~ ^{but} we ~~aren't~~ ^{can't} drink a beer ~~as~~ ^{as} much as you ~~because~~ ^{because} we aren't 18 years old. In Czech republic we have got a lot of kind of beer e.g. Svijany, Gambrinus, Kozel, Staropramen... What age can you drink ~~alcohol~~ alcohol? Have you got any pet? Here are popular small dogs.

Group with Marie, Pavel and Martin

Czech Republic

We are from Czech Republic. We are the small country in middle of Europe. We are the democracy country. Our capital city is Prague. Our country has 10 000 000 people. In the our school, ~~there~~ there are all childrens going to school 5 days of week. 11% of people living here are ~~gipsy~~ ^{gipsy}. Almost one language is spoken here. ~~And~~ We are the nice landscape. We are a lot of mountains and lakes, rivers, lowlands. Almost people ^{of} our country have internet in home, ~~an~~ and you? In Prague is a more turists. Have you ever been in Europe or Czech republic? ~~By the way~~ By the way? Have you nice life? We are learning English 4 ~~years~~ years, and you?

Appendix C

SYMBOL	MEANING	EXAMPLE
S	Incorrect spelling	I ^S recieved ^S jour letter.
W. O.	Wrong word order	We know ^{W.O.} well this city. ^{W.O.} Always I am happy here.
T	Wrong tense	If he <u>will come</u> , it will be too late.
C	Concord Subject and verb do not agree	Two policemen ^C has come. The news ^C are bad today.
W F	Wrong form	We <u>want</u> that you come. That table is ^{WF} our.
S/P	Singular or plural form wrong	We need more informations. ^S
h	Something has been left out	They said ^h was wrong. He hit me on ^h shoulder.
[]	Something is not necessary	It was ^[] too much difficult.
? M	Meaning is not clear	Come and ^{? M} rest with us for a week. The view from here is very ^{? M} suggestive.
N A	The usage is not appropriate	He ^{NA} requested me to sit down.
P	Punctuation wrong	Whats ^P your name ^P He asked me what I wanted? ^P

Appendix D

Dear Mamadou,

we are from Liberec. It is a town in the North of the Czech Republic. We are a small country in the heart of Europe. We are a democratic country. Our capital city is Prague. Our country has 10. 000. 000 people. In our school, all children are going to school 5 days of week. 11% of people living here are gypsies. Majority speaks one language. We have a nice landscape. We have a lot of montaines, lakes, rivers and lowlands. Majority of people of our country have internet at home, and you? In Prague a lot of tourists are. Have you ever been to Europe or the Czech Republic? By the way, have you a nice life? We learn English 7 years, and you?

(Marie Šrámová, Pavel Harus, Martin Tvrdík)

It isn't typical for us to have a big family. In our country it is typical to have only two kids. By us parents work every day. Do both of your parents work? Children must go to the school and do the homework. In our country school starts at 7:55. And how is it in your country? By us children live to twenty years with parents. And by you? Our typical names of girls are Tereza, Nikola and Eliška. And of boys are Tomáš, Jan and Martin. What are typical names in Mali?

(Kateřina Silná, Kristýna Procházková, Lukáš Vaňátko)

In our class every girl dances Street dance in free time. We also go to the cinema and to the theatre. And we like shopping. On Friday at night we go to the disco but we can't drink beer like you because we aren't 18 years old. In the Czech Republic we have got a lot of kinds of beer e.g. : Svijany, Gambrinus, Kozel, Staropramen... What age can you drink alcohol? Have you got any pets? Here are very popular small dogs.

(Lenka Lacinová, Eliška Radostová, Nikol Rousová, Lucie Rozsypalová)

We are 14-15 years old.

We are looking forward to your answer.

Yours,

ninth grade from Liberec (school Oblačná)

Appendix E

My dear ninth class,

as you already know, Mali is one of the poorest countries in Western Africa. You can go on the Internet only in the big cities like Bamako, Mopti, Kayes, Koulikoro or Timbuctou. Moreover, it is only in the big facilities like a university.

Only 4% of the people have the Internet acces at home. These people must be rich, I myself have Internet acces at home and it is very expensive!

In my country we start learning English at the age of 13. Schools begin every day from Monday till Friday at 8AM, it lasts till 12AM and in the afternoon from 3 to 5 PM.

In my country you can stay by your parents until your death. We get married and build a little house attached to our parents' one and it depends on us, whether we stay or not.

There are a lot of cultures in my country and every has its own names. For example, I am Peuhl and by us the first son's name is Amadi, the second son's name Samba and the third son's name Demba. The first daughter's name is Dickore, the second Kadi and the third Fanta.

Have a nice day,

Mamadou